

a very losers club holiday season by yagirlrikky

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Summary:

the losers club celebrates the holidays together in their new york house: eddie ignores his feelings, richie makes jokes and annoys people, bev makes christmas gifts, stan attempts to get richie to appreciate hannukah for more than just food, mike plans fun outings, bill adheres to tradition, and ben just wants everyone to have a good, stress-free month.

one chapter for every day of december (for the most part. there will

be 31 chapters, at least!)

1. Chapter 1

December 1st was a Friday.

All of the Losers had classes, so they couldn't take the time to celebrate "the beginning of the holiday season!", and Bill and Eddie had refused to decorate and get a tree while it was still November, so the house they shared showed no signs of the holiday season. They all hurried up and down the stairs, trying to remember everything for class, and they all just barely remembered to eat a piece of the advent calendar chocolate that Richie had bought on sale the week before.

Eddie Kaspbrak actually woke up late on December 1st. He and Richie shared a room with Stan, who was usually pretty good at waking them up, but somehow he has slept through the alarm or Stan had left early (Stan had woken up early, decided it was better to be early to class than lay around in bed for twenty more minutes, and turned off the alarm), and Richie had a later class so he would be waking up later. That left Eddie to frantically dress in a polo and jeans, grab a protein shake and granola bar, and sprint out the door to catch the subway.

As he ran down the street, he could somewhat appreciate New York in the wintertime through the frenzy of activity going on on the sidewalk and in his brain. Bev loved the Christmas lights everywhere, and he resolved to ask her if she wanted to walk down to the corner store with him, just to see her reaction at the city all lit up at night. It was slippery, which would be bad for Ben's weekend runs, but Richie had suggested they all go ice-skating together the next day, which made Eddie smile in anticipation.

He sat rigidly on the subway, got off at his stop, suffered through class, emailed Bill during a boring lecture, and sat rigidly on the subway home. He slipped and slid his way back to the house, dropped his things on the couch, and collapsed unto the pillows. Stan, the first one home, came into the living room with his hands full of bread dough.

"Eddie-" he started hesitantly.

"Yes, I will walk down to the store to get you something for dinner. What do you need?" Eddie grumbled in reply. Stan smiled.

"I'm making a bunch of spaghetti and meatballs, and Richie made bread dough for some reason before leaving this morning, so we're having breadsticks too. I wanted some parmesan?"

"Yeah, okay," Eddie said, pulling his coat on again. The store wasn't that far away and they usually averaged a trip per day- whether it be a crucial ingredient Richie or Bill forgot, some Red Bull to keep them awake during late-night study sessions, or candy Bev stopped for on her walk home. Eddie carefully stepped around ice, gum, and god-knows-what as he hurried down the street, finally warming up a bit as he stepped into the store.

He found the cheese easily, and was standing in front of a shelf of cookies and debating whether or not to buy some, when someone grabbed him from behind and lifted him up.

"Richie!" he admonished when he saw it was his friend. "You could have given me a heart attack!"

"Yes," Richie deadpanned. "A healthy nineteen-year-old boy died from a heart attack after his friend does something he has done at least once a day since he was old enough to lift him." He smirked, and picked Eddie up again.

"What are you doing here? It's not on your way home," Eddie asked once Richie put him down.

"Mike got home around the same time as me, and wanted some dessert for after dinner. Bev ate all of the ice cream in a midterm-induced stress attack, so I offered to run down and grab something. Seems you already got the bases covered, though," he finished.

They got to the register and paid for the food and started the walk home. "Wait. If Stan knew I was at the store, why didn't he just text me? He didn't need to send you."

Richie blinked. "Uh, I think he said you forgot your phone? I dunno." Eddie felt around in his pocket and realized he had, in fact, forgotten

his phone.

"Oh my god, what if I had been kidnapped? I would have no way to contact you guys, you wouldn't be able to trace me. Or if something happened to me and they didn't have my medical ID?" Eddie started to ramble.

"Again. Perfectly healthy nineteen-year-old boy. Five minutes away from his house. In a not-terrible neighborhood."

"Brain aneurysms, Rich. They can happen at any moment," Eddie argued.

"Oh, Eds-"

"We've talked about calling me Eds!"

"Have we? I'm pretty sure I call you Eds, and then you say 'don't call me that!' and then I call you Eds even more, Eds."

"I'm divorcing you." Eddie started to walk faster, away from Richie.

"Eddie Spaghetti, we're not even married! Or dating!" Richie yelled down the street.

"Fine. I'll marry you and then just divorce you right after." Eddie shot a grin back at Richie, then stopped so that his best friend could catch up.

"Sounds good to me. Three conditions, though- Mike caters. Bev designs our suits, Stan officiates."

"What about Ben and Bill?" Eddie asked, chalking up the warm feeling in his chest to the general holiday spirit.

"Um, Bill is my best man. Ben is yours, and Georgie is the ring bearer slash flower boy."

"How is Georgie both?"

"He wears a flower crown with his suit, throws the petals, and then Bill or someone can hand him the pillow with the rings and he stands

there until Stan says 'the rings please' and then he does the ring bearer thing," Richie explained.

"You've really thought this through," Eddie commented jokingly as they walk in the front door.

"Thought what through?" Bev asks from the chair. She'd obviously just gotten home, she's still wearing her scarf and hat.

"Why, my wedding to the lovely Edward Spaghedward, my dear!" Richie announced grandly. "Oh, boy," Bev sighs with a smile as she finished pulling off her winter things. Richie gave her a sort of half-hug and pranced into the kitchen to give Stan his groceries. Then he picked up his bag and ran up the stairs to the room Eddie shares with him and Stan, hopefully to do homework. Eddie knew deep down, though, that Richie will watch three episodes of the Simpsons, procrastinate his work, and when Stan yells "DINNERTIME!" he'll call back "STAN! I WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF MY HOMEWORK!" and then blame him later when he has nothing done.

Bev was on her phone now, scrolling TikTok and Instagram. Eddie pulled out his laptop and decided to get a head start on a project. While they sit together, in silence except for Stan's humming, Eddie felt peaceful. It's that holiday spirit, he thought. Then Bev shattered the relative quiet.

"So, wedding, hmm?" she asked teasingly, looking up from her phone. "How did he pop the question? Ring in your champagne? Down on one knee?"

"Shut up," Eddie replied, knowing and hating the fact that he's blushing. "I said I was divorcing him, he replied that we weren't even dating, I said I'd marry him just to divorce him the next day. He got carried away, like he does with literally everything in his life."

"Romantic," Bev chuckled, returning to her social media.

Ben came home next, kissing Bev on the cheek and going to help set the table. He was followed by Mike, who brought food from his culinary arts class, and finally a grumpy and cold Bill, who boldly declared that "it's not that cold out, you guys are just weak" and went

out without his jacket. Bev ceded the blanket to him, and they all chatted while Ben played Christmas music. Bill had an essay due Tuesday, and he was going to wait to start it, but Bev warned him to at least get something done before Monday night. By the time Stan called for dinner, Bill was warm and Richie had actually gotten a head start on his homework.

Dinner was delicious- Stan, Mike, and Richie could cook the best out of all of them- but Stan was usually busy in the evenings, and Richie liked to "experiment in the kitchen" a lot, so it was usually Mike doing the cooking. He had taken a culinary arts class for fun this year, and was thoroughly enjoying it, but couldn't be persuaded to change his major.

That night in their room, Eddie typed on his laptop while Stan made pie charts for his finance class. Richie was working on a new comedy routine, and he tried it out for them several times before he got it right. He had an open mic coming up, but Eddie was convinced Richie could headline.

Around midnight, he started to hear the sounds of the household going to bed: Mike showered at night, the ferocious sounds of Bill's computer keyboard stopped, Bev's sewing machine turned off, and the light in her and Ben's room went off. Richie swallowed a melatonin pill and hopped into his twin bed, Stan settled in the bottom bunk, and Eddie climbed the laddet to the top one. They all had bunk beds in their rooms, Richie was the seventh bunk-bed wheel that got a bed to his own. Stan turned on a podcats like he did every night- it interested Stan, provided a kind of background noise for Eddie to fall asleep to, and bored Richie to sleep in about an hour.

And that is how December 1st ended.

2. Chapter 2

December 2nd was a Saturday.

Ben Hanscom woke up at 6am on Saturdays. His alarm was on his phone, not his alarm clock, because he didn't want to wake Bev up early on a weekend morning. He grabbed his earbuds, changed quietly, and slipped out the door for his morning run. He had one earbud playing Maroon 5, one earbud out as he jogged through the city.

There was a reason he went early, a reason he went jogging at all: yes, it was an easy way to stay healthy and sure, it was nice to get a little fresh air without worrying that a maniac with a mullet was going to stab you with a pocketknife, but Ben liked going by himself in the morning and seeing the city wake up. He liked seeing businessmen and executives heading to the office in ties, he likes seeing people leave houses in the early morning- his friends would probably say they were sneaking out of a one night stand, but the poet in Ben thought it was a secret love affair. Or maybe they were leaving to let their do out and water the plants before going back and spending another day with the person they loved. He tried to compose a poem in his head while he ran, something about the sun rising and the buildings coming to life with the people inside, but it was too hard, so he settled for mental bullet points he could organize later.

He came back late, around 6:45, to the smell of eggs and bacon and the sound of a country-type Christmas song. He smiled. Mike. Mike was in pajama pants and a t-shirt, cracking eggs and singing along under his breath. He noticed Ben sitting at the dining room table taking his shoes off and grinned at him. "Good run?" "Yeah," Ben said "Chilly, though." "Yeah, dude. December, New York, no jacket," Mike said teasingly as he handed Ben a plate of eggs and bacon. Ben took a bite, then got up quickly to start the coffeemaker. By the time they were both sipping coffee and eating, Stan had come downstairs still in his pajamas but with neatly brushed hair and brushed teeth.

Stan made microwave oatmeal and some tea (one cup for him, one for Eddie) and joined them at the table.

“Are Rich and Eddie awake?” Mike asked.

“My alarm went off at seven am like it does every morning. I woke them up like I do every morning. They both said ‘five more minutes, Stan’ like they do every morning. I predict that they will be the last ones downstairs, like it is every morning.” Stan leaned back in his chair and sipped his tea.

“Ok. Stan, Ben? Could you guys make an agenda for today? I have some things I want us to get done,” Mike said.

“Sure!” Stan hopped up, found some paper and a pen, and settled in with Ben. “Number one- eat breakfast. Number two- get ready for the day,” he mumbled as he wrote them down. Then he looked up at Ben expectantly.

“Number three- get Christmas tree!” Mike shoutred from the kitchen where he was tidying up. Stan wrote it down.

“Um four- decorate the tree?” Ben offered. Stan copied it in his neat handwriting, then added 'mandatory’.

“Mandatory?” Ben asked.

“This is the first year we’re spending the holidays away from our parents. I want us all to partake in everything, make some memories,” Stan explained.

“Okay. I mean, the three of us will want to decorate,” Ben said, indicating himself, Stan and Mike. “Bill may or may not, depending on the state of his grade point average.”

“Billy’s a stickler for tradition, though!” Mike called. “I bet he’d make time. Eddie might not be thrilled, though. And Bev’s not really a holiday person, is she?”

“Bevvie loves the holidays!” Ben defended. “She just never really got the... holiday experience. You’re right about Eddie though. And I could see Richie either getting super into the holiday spirit or calling it lame.”

“Number five!” Stan said pointedly, returning their focus to his

agenda. "Decorate the house. Optional." "Why optional?" Mike asked. "Because I don't want to force everyone to decorate if they have things to do."

Bev came downstairs then, wearing one of Bill's old flannels and shorts. She kissed Ben, ruffled Stan's hair (not enough to really annoy him, though) and hugged Mike from behind, propping her chin on his shoulder as he cooked. Bill joined them a few minutes later, holding his laptop with one hand and precariously typing with the other. He sat at the table, not even looking up, drained a coffee mug, and furrowed his eyebrows. Ben looked at Mike, who gave him a look that meant "he's fine if not a little stressed."

The sounds of bickering and running, at around 8am, signaled the presence of Richie and Eddie. Richie came running down the stairs with Eddie thrown over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes, and dropped the smaller boy on the couch. Then he slid on his slippery socks into the kitchen and wrapped his arms around Bev's waist, even though she was still attached to Mike's back.

"I love you both, guys-" Mike started. "-but I feel like this is unsafe." They detangled themselves and sat down at the table. Bev sat between Eddie (who had gotten off the couch) and Ben. Richie simply sat on Stan's lap. Ben watched his friend's face go from annoyance to tiredness to acceptance of the situation, then stand up and dump Richie on the floor. Stan put his plate and mug in the sink and grabbed a cup of tea and a cup of coffee. He gave the tea to Eddie and offered the coffee to Richie, who was still laying on the floor. Richie just hopped up, went into the kitchen, and began his daily morning routine of dumping half a sugarbowl in his coffee, toasting his bread for just a minute too long, covering his toast in unhealthy amounts of butter, and sprinkling salt on top when it was done. Armed with this breakfast of champions, he returned to the table. Stan and Eddie eyed him but neither of them said a word. Bill, for his part, was still ferociously typing away. He had a tendency to smash the keys as if he was trying to avenge someone they had done harm to, and it was a wonder his computer wasn't broken yet.

"Bill?" Ben ventured. "You, uh, you okay there, buddy?" Bill blinked, as if just realizing he was at the breakfast table.

“Yeah. Yeah. I couldn't sleep last night and I ended up writing a really good chapter on my head, and I need to write it all down before I lose it.”

“Well, maybe take a break? Mike and Stan put together an agenda for the day.”

Stan, given his opportunity, cleared his throat. “Today, after getting dressed, we’re going to go get our Christmas tree. Then we are all going to decorate together, and after that, if you want, you can help Ben, Mike and I decorate the house.”

“I’ll help!” Richie volunteered immediately. Bill had his assignment, and Bev and Eddie had “top secret holiday things” to do, so the four of them decided to start decorating later that afternoon.

Once they were all dressed, the seven of them piled the best they could into the Hanlon family truck. Mike’s grandfather had insisted they take it, he couldn’t process the fact that it was New York City and they would have literally no use for a car. “You can always use a pickup truck,” he had said over Mike’s protests. It was a 1996 Ford Centurion that, in theory, could seat all seven of them. But usually on trips at least one of them (usually Richie and Bill) offered to sit in the trunk.

Unsurprisingly, the ride to the farm took a while. Ben was sitting in the middle, sandwiched between Beverly and Bill while Mike drive with Stan sitting shotgun. Richie and Eddie were bickering loudly in the way-back seats. Bev leaned her head on Ben’s shoulder and showed him some meme on her Instagram Explore page, and Bill leaned over to chuckle quietly. Richie passed a CD to Ben, and he handed it to Stan (in their car, shotgun controlled the music. the driver was allowed to veto, however). Stan glanced at it and slid it into the CD player. The sounds of Weezer filled the car, and Richie shouted the lyrics to “Say It Ain’t So” in Eddie and Bill’s ears the rest of the way.

They arrived at the tree place, and decided to split up. Mike, Stan and Bill went one way, Richie and Eddie wandered off in another

direction, and that left Ben and Bev.

"Shall we?" he asked, looking at her.

"We shall," she replied, wrapping her gloved hands around his arm.

They strolled around for a bit, and eventually happened upon Bill, Mike, Eddie, Stan and Richie. The latter was arguing loudly.

"Stan, how would you feel if we went to a... *menorah farm*? And you found a perfect, amazing menorah for Hannukah, but I also found a good menorah? Not as good as yours of course, sub-par, but still a good menorah?"

"What's happening, Hanlon?" Beverly asked.

"Stan and Richie both found what they claim to be the perfect tree," Mike replied.

Meanwhile, Stan had had enough. "Okay! Richie! First of all, it's not a menorah, it's a goddamn hannukiah! For Hannukah! And second of all, neither menorahs nor hannukiahs grow on farms, dumbass-"

"Alrighty!" Ben said in his Authority Voice. "Why don't we take a vote? Let's take a vote. Bill, Mike, and Stan for tree one. Richie and Eddie for tree two. Bev?"

"Sorry Stan, but I have to support my boy," Bev said as she walked to stand next to Richie.

"What about me?" Ben asked jokingly.

"You're the tiebreaker!" Eddie said. "Pick a side!"

In the end, they got Stan's tree. It was smaller and cheaper (Richie was taller than it), and it fit in the back of the truck.

Correction: Mike, Ben and Bill had to shove it through the open windows of the middle seat where it sat precariously, the top and the truck sticking out of the windoes, and then Bev rolled the windows up to the tree wouldn't slip out in NYC traffic. Then Richie, Stan,

Eddie, Mike and Bill crowded into the trunk and way-back seats while Ben and Bev drove home.

Once they got home, they all had to carry a tree into the house and then Richie set up the tree-skirt while Stan found the box of ornaments.

"I CALL PUTTING THE STAR ON THE TREE!" Richie yelled at the same time as Eddie. They compromised by Eddie hopping on Richie's back and setting it at a precarious angle at the top. Bev and Ben ran in circles around the tree with lights, and Stan put up some ceramic ornaments he had made. Bill was putting up the special ornaments the Losers had brought from their houses- art that Stan and Richie had made in kindergarten, Denbrough family heirlooms, handmade animals Mike's grandfather had taught him to make, Eddie's favorite teddy bear ornament from when he was little, and little knickknacks Bev had crafted. In the background, they kept adding songs to the Spotify queue- Bill and Eddie liked traditional Christmas carols, Richie liked the old-fashioned big-band music and Frank Sinatra (he tried, and actually did pretty well, to imitate the singers) and Mike preferred country-Christmas.

After a while Bill retired to his room to resume his angry typing that contrasted with his lo-fi playlist. Eddie and Bev bundled up and took an Uber to get some shopping done, and Richie, Ben, Mike and Stan started to decorate. Stan lovingly set up the James family hannukiah in the kitchen window while Richie searched for candles, and Ben took the remaining Christmas lights and strung them in the upstairs hallway. Mike was setting random festive throw-pillows and cross stitched samplers that bore happy sayings like "Merry & Bright!", "Santa Claus is Coming to Town", and "Home for the Holidays".

"We aren't home for the holidays, though," Stan said when he saw the last one. "That's kind of the whole point."

"It's just a saying!" Mike said as he threw a pillow at Stan that said "O Come Let Us Adore Him".

Finally, in the other kitchen windowsill, Mike and Ben arranged the nativity scene. Ben had always loved that part of decorating at home-

he would make a little manger out of wood scraps or cardboard, and shred some tissue paper for hay, and put the little Mary and the little Joseph adoringly watching the even littler Jesus. He'd try to hide the angel too, because he figured that she wouldn't want to be seen by everyone. This year, he hid her in the background behind all of the shepherds, and tied a little scrap of fabric he found in Beverly's workspace around her shoulders and wings.

"She's pretending to be a shepherd," he explained to Mike, who was watching over his shoulder. Mike smiled.

Bev and Eddie returned shortly, arms full of mysterious packages and cheeks tinged red. They ran up to Bev and Ben's room, but not before Bev shot Ben a mischevious smile. He heard them collapse onto the bed upstairs and turn on music. Bill exclaimed something from his room, and then ran down the stairs shouting "I DID IT, I MET THE MINIMUM WORD REQUIREMENT! EASILY! I'M GOING TO WRITE MORE!" He did a little dance in the kitchen, and then sprinted back up to continue smasking his keyboard.

There was no "family dinner" that night, because Bill was holed up for the night. Stan microwaved some pasta for himself and Richie, his roommate was scribbling comedy notes in their room and listening to a Queen record. They ate together in the sense that they were in the same room; Stan listened to Vampire Weekend in his headphones and read a book whjile Richie kept at his joke writing. Bev and Eddie finished gifts and, along with Ben, ordered Chinese food and ate while upholding their yearly tradition of watching A Christmas Prince, the way they had done every year since high school. Bev lay her head in Ben's lap, Eddie fussed that she would choke, and Ben laughed at him. bev did almost choke, though, and he had to whap her several times on the back. Mike did some homework and he and Bill ate a whole box of Kraft mac and cheese themselves.

December 2nd ended with Ben drinking sleepytime tea at midnight while Bev brushed her hair out and braided it into a bunch of knots on her head, so it would look nice in the morning. They could hear Mike telling Bill to *go to sleep, already, you've written plenty* and Eddie flopping around on his mattress trying to get comfortable. All things considered, though, it was a very nice way to end the day.

3. Chapter 3

December 3rd was a Sunday.

Gone to run some errands. I will be back by eleven o'clock (not p.m.).

Love, Stan

Stanley Uris woke up early, had breakfast by himself at a local diner, and then went to the library to return some books and grab a few more. He ended up staying for about an hour, engrossed in a book about Galapagos Finches and Darwin. Then he made the commute home, stopped to get some chips (they were out) and walked to the house.

He was expecting the chaos of his friends spread out around the house, the TV blaring in competition with music and people yelling to keep it down, they were doing homework. What he walked into was decidedly not that.

The Losers were crammed into the smallest couch, wrapped in blankets. They were still being chaotic, to be sure, but they were concentrated in a small spot. Eddie was on Richie's lap, Bev and Ben were snuggling, Bill was looking claustrophobic, and Mike was just tired.

"STANIEL the MANIEL!" Richie whopped, causing Eddie to cover his ears in annoyance. "AND how are you on this blustery winter day?"

"Confused," Stan said.

"The heat's out," Bill explained, wrapped in several sweaters.

"Yeah, as of like a half hour ago, it's been freezing in here," Bev muttered.

"And none of you know how to determine the problem, let alone fix it?" Stan asked.

"Um, in a nutshell, yes."

"Mike?"

"I grew up on a farm? We didn't have a heating system?"

"Okay, Billy? Richie?"

"My dad was the handy one in the house," Bill said while Richie added "my parents didn't trust me enough."

"Ben?"

"No, sorry!"

"...Bev?"

"Stan," she said, "if we knew how to fix the problem it would be fixed."

They ended up going back to the library. Stan called his dad, who had always been mildly handy around the house, and asked what to do.

"Hi, Dad."

"Hello, Stanley."

"Um, our heat's broke. Like the house has no heat."

"And you called me? Son, call a furnace guy to take a look-see."

"Oh. Will he fix it?"

"If it's broken, he will. Also, Stanley, have Bill call his mom when he gets the chance. Nothing's wrong, no, but she wants to check in with him."

"Okay, got it."

"Wait, Stanley? Have you been going to synagogue lately?"

"Um, I gotta go, Dad." Stan hung up.

He went off to find his friends then: Richie was sitting in the autobiography section, reading Steve Martin's book. Ben was in poetry, Bill was chatting to a librarian, Eddie was having a stare-off over a shelf with some random-ass child, Mike was in the history section, and Bev was looking at the various activities offered at night.

They returned home to a house that was still freezing, and Ben was elected to call the furnace people.

"Hello, I was wondering if I could schedule an appointment? Yes, my name is Ben Hanscom. I live in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Mm-hm. Okay! Well, um the heat just shut off randomly about an hour or so ago. We were wondering if you could come by and take a look? Mm-hm. Okay. Alright. Okay, we will see you then, Mr- Parson? Okay!" Ben hung up the phone and deflated. "He will be here tomorrow morning."

Everyone groaned, and Richie said "Well, what are we supposed to do until then?"

"It's like noon," Mike said. "Let's go grab lunch? And then we can maybe to out, or back to the library to work on school stuff."

They went with Mike's plan, because of course they did. An excellent Chinese food place in Brooklyn, and then the library, and then they stopped at a fabric store for Bev and then Mike and Bill had to run in to a used bookstore for "just a second" that turned into twenty minutes and a new book each. Stan met a pigeon that he liked very much and Ben helped Bev find a skirt pattern online, with the backdrop of Richie's steady stream of jokes and Eddie's groans at them.

They returned home to a house that was still freezing, but Richie made some macaroni and cheese with blue macaroni noodles ("You put food coloring in the water, Stanny, it's not hard") that gave it a slightly strange look, but it was delicious nonetheless and, more importantly, it warmed them up a bit. Then they swaddled themselves in blankets, Bill turned "A Christmas Story" on TV, and they settled in.

Of course, Richie- a self-described "scholar of comedy"- could quote most of the film from memory and he did. They were smushed together, cuddling-but-not-really, and Eddie said about halfway through "We should make some popcorn" but nobosy got up. Stan understood why.

Of course, all good things come to an end. It was a school night for everybody, and as the credits rolled they all started to get up. Then they all realized, simultaneously, that they still didn't have goddamn heating in their house.

"We should share beds." Good old Beverly, to the rescue.

"I don't have a problem with that," Richie said. "Someone can share with me."

"I call the opposite of dibs on sharing a bed with Richie. He cuddles in his sleep," Stan said immediately.

"How- how is that a bad thing?" Ben asked. "Cuddles are nice, even with your friends."

"Richie is 6 foot and about 190 pounds. He can and will smother me."

"I would be offended, Stan, but I've come to expect this type of behavior from you. Eddie, my love, will you share my bed on this special night?" Richie grinned hopefully.

"Shut the FUCK up about that dumb fifties song, Richie, and fine, I will, but if you hog the blankets it's over."

"Fine, fine." And Richie picked Eddie up in a fireman's carry and spun

around really quickly, Bev stretched her hand like she could catch Eddie lest he fall.

"I don't care," Bill said. "Stan, if you want a break from them-" he rolled his eyes at Richie and Eddie, "- you can bunk with me and Mike."

"Sounds good to me."

That night, Stan watched Richie and Eddie brush their teeth and make faces at each other in the mirror, set to the tune of Istanbul (Not Constantinople), while Mike showered and Bill read the new book he bought earlier.

'Is it any good?" Stan asked.

"Ehh. It's called Pet Sematery, and I'm not a huge fan of the author, but I heard this one was good."

Stan fell asleep cold with Bill's shoulder digging into his. It wasn't the best way to fall asleep but it was better than being freezing alone.

Notes for the Chapter:

i am so so sorry this chapter is

a) late and

b) short

please tell me if there are any typos! thank u

4. Chapter 4

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter four got deleted by accident and i don't have time to rewrite it again, so nothing happened that day.

December 5th was a Tuesday.

Bill Denbrough was excited, because Georgie was going to come and visit on Friday night and stay through the weekend, and it was the first time he had seen the new house. Richie was going to take Stan's bed, Stan was going to stay in Bill's bed, Bill was going to take the couch, and Georgie got Richie's bed. The Losers were all thrilled too: Bill remembered waking up when he was six and finding that Mrs Uris was at his house, his parents were at the hospital, and he was going to be a big brother. He had gone to Stan's house for the day, and an hour later Richie had arrived with Eddie, and they spent the day making little signs and decorations for the baby's room. Stan, Richie and Eddie were there with him standing in front of the Denbrough house when Georgie was brought home, and they were right beside him six years later when Georgie went missing one summer. That was the summer he met Bev and Ben and Mike: Ben was hurt and they had to help him, Bev had helped them get the supplies they needed to treat him, and then they helped Mike beat up Henry Bowers in the Barrens. The three kids had joined their motley crew, helped Bill and the boys save Georgie from the clutches of Henry Bowers, and had never separated again.

Bev and Ben credited Georgie for bringing them closer to the Losers, Mike loved children, Richie and Stan saw Georgie as their brother, and Georgie and Eddie always got along very well, as Eddie and Bill were usually the babysitters for him when they got older (Bev's dad didn't want his little girl getting a job). So yeah, they were excited. Derry schools were closing a week early on Thursday due to incredibly cold temperatures and a possible blizzard, and Georgie would take the train from Portland, Maine at six a.m., arriving at about six in the evening. Bill had the train schedule practically memorized, Georgie had all of the Losers' phone numbers in case of

emergency, and Bill and Richie were currently debating ideas for things to do while he was in town. He wouldn't even be here for another four days!

"Okay, so, ice skating at Rockefeller Center," Richie was saying with a mouth full of Starbucks croissant. "It's, like, a New York tourist thing that's actually fun to do. And if we go late at night, like ten-thirty, we can get there after the crowd. And even go to there from somewhere else, like the Empire State!"

"Or the MOMA," Bill interjected. "Maybe we go wake up, breakfast, kinds hang around for a bit, lunch, Central Park, some museum, dinner, Rockefeller."

"Fineeeee," Richie said. "I mean, I'm sure everyone else will like that plan, but I wanted to do touristy stuff!"

"That is touristy stuff! And Richie," Bill said slyly, "Are you sure you just want to go to Rockefeller for the fun of ice skating?"

"Whatever do you mean, Billiam?"

"I mean it's on a bunch of lists of things to do in NYC in December and you're hardcore crushing on Eddie."

"This is slander on my good name," Richie said, reddening. "I have to bid you adeiu, though, because we've reached my building." He gave Bill an affectionate half-hug. "See ya!"

Bill had a test and then a lecture for a class he didn't even want to take (it was required for his major) right after, which was cruel and unusual punishment, but it was Tuesday. Tuesdays meant he could grab food with Stan in the cafeteria and listen for forty-five minutes while he told Bill about whatever he had learned in class that day, and on Tuesdays he had an ornithology class first thing, so Bill got lots of quality bird content and facts while he quietly ate his sandwich. Every so often, Stan would stop and say "Sorry, I'm talking a lot, how was your class?" and Bill would say "No, no! I like your bird facts, keep going!" and Stan would smile and keep going.

It was a peculiar thing with the core four Losers- they all had trouble talking. Well, no, they had no trouble talking. It was the stopping that was the problem. Richie had a habit of saying "Fuck, guys, I'm so sorry I've been rambling about this boring shit," in the middle of an enthusiastic lecture about The Simpsons or music or John Mulaney that made Bill's heart sink because it was from years and years of being told *Richie, don't ramble* and *Richie, not everybody is as enthusiastic as you* and *Richie, please be quiet* from parents and teachers and even "friends" that meant well. Stan had been raised to let others speak, to not share a billion facts about birds and plants and to pipe down during dinner, and so he would try to catch himself in the middle of long speeches before people would get annoyed at him. Eddie had been told that "Children should be seen and not heard, Eddie-bear!" and so rarely spoke his mind as a small child, but when he broke free of fake medicines and gazebos they realized there had also been a muzzle on his mouth. Eddie had an opinion on everything, politics and movies and interior design and the pattern of Richie's socks, and he shared each and every one of them with the Losers, and Bill saw how fiercely happy he was to be able to do and say what he wanted, and it near broke his heart to see Eddie's face fall when someone told him to "just shut up" or "be quiet", similar to Richie's and Stan's. And as for Bill, he rarely opened his mouth in the first place; every time he talked back in Derry he expected for Henry and Victor to come tease him mercilessly, and even though years of speech therapy and constant reminders to slow down his words had cured the stutter, it didn't cure the fear of talking. He supposed that's why they got along so well when they were younger: Richie and Stan talked their way out of mean teachers and schoolyard bullies, and then Bill and Eddie patched them up after the inevitable fights. Ben was quiet by nature, preferring to communicate in pencil and paper than his voice, but he would chat with Bill about books and writing from sunset to sundown. Mike wasn't the chatty type, more of a listener, and Bev was like Eddie in that she was finally free to say whatever the hell she wanted to whoever the hell she wanted, except when people told her to shut up she told them to shut up in return and kept talking.

So Bill was sitting in the cafeteria while Stan talked about starling with stars in his eyes, with an untouched salad in front of him (another core four similarity: they either ate or talked. Never both at

the same time.) and his hair curling onto his eyes, and somehow the fluorescent lights made him look good. Like, his hair was very pretty (were boys pretty? Either, way, Stan was) and then it hit Bill like a ton of bricks. **Holy fucking shit. I like Stan as, like, a boyfriend.**

He took a large bite of sandwich, checked his bare wrist, announced he didn't want to be late, and sprinted out of the cafeteria with Stan mid-sentence, confused, and a little hurt.

In his American Literature class, instead of taking notes on this week's novel, Bill decided to sift through his feelings the only way he knew how: writing.

Bill Denbrough

Dealing With Confusing Feelings 101

12/5

FACTS

- *I find Stanley Uris attractive*
 - *especially the way he looks when he's excited about something*
- *Stanley Uris slept in a small bunk bed with me the other night and it made me feel the same way a good Hozier song does*
- *When Beverly made me watch The Outsiders there was a bunch of scenes where Matt Dillon was shirtless and it made me feel things*
- *But also when Ben and Stan and I watched Pride and Prejudice, Keira Knightley was Lizzy Bennet and that also made me feel similar things to shirtless Matt Dillon*
- *Stanley Uris sometimes grabs my wrist when he is scared and it makes me feel like I'm an Avenger or something and not like a skinny teenage boy*
 - *Richie grabs my hand sometimes too though and I do not feel*

the same way when Richie does it

○ *Richie is bisexual. Ask Richie?*

- *I would be perfectly fine if Stanley Uris wanted to go on a cute date to Ellen's Starlight Diner or to Central Park to birdwatch or to the art museum to look at art*

○ *I would not object if he were to hold my hand, kiss me on the cheek (mouth?) and take a photo together that we would put on Instagram*

○ *I would also be alright if he wanted to switch rooms with Mike, sleep in the bed with me (not in a weird way but in a "he's very warm and soft when he sleeps" way) and remind me gently but firmly to get some rest*

■ *Mike does that already but sometimes he lets me stay up until 2am and that isn't healthy according to Eddie so maybe Stan would make me go to bed*

CONCLUSION

- *????????????????????*
- *Even if I was gay (bisexual?) Stan is not and he does not return my feelings.*

There, Bill thought. End of story.

--

Stan was. And he did return the feelings.

Stan and Richie had figured their sexualities out one hot summer day

at the quarry, when the Losers were swimming. It was June, and it was still kind of chilly, so Richie and STan were sitting with Ben on some rocks chatting idly.

"So, Ben," Stan had said with a smirk. "Tell me the truth. WOULD you date Bev?" This was after Bill and Beverly had broken up.

"I dunno," Ben said with a blush. "She's pretty, and super cool, and really smart. I guess I would."

They sat in silence for a second, then-

"Stan, would you date Bill?"

Ben had said it as a conversation-filler, expecting "Nooo!" and giggles from Richie. Instead, to his surprise, Stan replied "yeah, totally!" almost immediately.

"What?" Ben said.

"Yeah, I'd date Bill. He's great, he's so smart and he's really brave and he cares about all of us so much..." Ben was looking confused.

"Yeah!" Richie said. "I'd be down to date the hell out of Eddie anytime. It's not a big deal, Ben, I'm sure you'd go out with Mike or Bill if given the chance. Not Eds, though, he's mine."

Ben was looking more and more worried by the second. "I don't want to be boyfriends with Bill or Mike. And I heard the big kids at school say that was wrong, but they also said Bev was a- you know."

"Well, Bev isn't." Richie said. "And so they must not be right about this thing either."

Ben nodded, and then in sync they all three turned to the water below: Bev floating on her back, Bill jumping off, Eddie swimming lazily. And they looked at each other, and they all three knew well enough what the others were thinking.

After that, Stan and Richie scoured the internet for articles on homo-

and bi- sexuality, Ben found books at the library with queer protagonists, and finally in freshman year Richie announced that he was, in fact, bisexual. Yes, the Losers (and his parents, who were accepting if not a little confused) were sworn to secrecy, but they could all tell how much lighter he seemed. And Stan stayed in the closet; tucked his crushes on Bill and Ansel Elgort away on a shelf, brought some blankets and a few good books into there, and settled in for a long stay.

5. Chapter 5

On December 6 (a Wednesday), Beverly Marsh found out her only class of the day was canceled.

She was pretty excited because she had a lot of Christmas and Hannukah gifts to finish, so after she had kissed Ben, hugged Richie, fixed Eddie's hair, straightened Stan's collar, tapped Bill on the nose and handed Mike a granola bar, she ran up to her room to retrieve her shopping list for the day.

GIFTS!!!!!!!!!! by bev

eddie-cool new shorts

richie- neon bowtie

stan- bowtie but with birds

ben- bookbag with embroidery

mike- bookbag with fabric transfers

bill- flannel blanket

Bev loved Christmas, loved the secrecy of the gifts and sneaking them under the tree at midnight, Home Alone (which Richie had memorized) and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer (which Bill could quote from memory) and in recent years, Stan set up the hanukkiah and they each got to light a candle. Until her junior year of high school, Christmas had consisted of her dad making her dress up and then sitting in the living room reading the Bible while he got drunk. So she wanted to make these years count.

Pulling on her fur-lined leather jacket over her jeans and t-shirt, she headed out the door to the subway with keys tucked between her fingers. She made her way to the subway station, waited around and scrolled TikTok, then hopped on the train to Manhattan. She faked a very loud and personal phone call with her "brother" Richie about the hot boyfriend she was bringing home for the holidays, a guy she had met in a martial arts class, and then hopped off at her stop to go

fabric shopping.

She did wish Richie was there, not only because she knew he would have held her hand and made loud jokes to fend off the weird guy on the subway, but also because he loved fabric stores. He'd just walk up and down the aisles with her, feeling the different fabrics, while she shopped. Today was secret, though. She had even withdrawn cash from the Losers' joint bank account so they wouldn't know she had done a bunch of shopping. The trip with Eddie had been fake: she was getting some school supplies, he was just along for the ride.

She found a fabric for Richie's bowtie that was almost a replica of the pattern Eleven had worn in the latest *Stranger Things*. Some bright blue fabric for Eddie's shorts, silky and smooth for running. Canvas for Ben and Mike, more embroidery thread. She asked if they had any bird-pattered fabric but they didn't.

She took a taxi to another fabric store, where they didn't have a bird pattern either. Luckily, it was down the street from Goodwill, where Bev bought nearly every soft flannel shirt in the store. She googled "fabric stores near me" and gave in to going to Mood Fabrics, a place she only went when she knew she could spend lots of time (and money). She ended up walking in, asking a sales associate where the bird-printed fabrics were, buying a navy twill with little brown birds all over it, ignoring the temptation of a gorgeous faux-velvet that was on sale (and would make the cutest skirt for their New Year's Party), paying, and walking out.

She hung out in the city a while longer, feeling the feeling of simultaneous suffocation and freedom. Right now it was Eddie she wanted to be experiencing this with- Eddie who had sympathized with her back in Derry, Eddie who had come to sneak her out of her window at night with Richie and taken her on adventures, Eddie who was banned from her house (and she was banned from his) but still snuck her in and out that back window without Alvin catching a glimpse. Eddie who was as free as she was now. She smiled slightly at the thought of her best friend (because yeah, Richie and Eddie were her best friends) here with her and what he would be doing. She could hear his voice now: *Get out of the road and stop fucking jaywalking, asshole!* If Richie had come too, he would have been

wheezing with laughter while Eddie yelled at some guy who wasn't even listening, cursing him out and getting mad over nothing.

She took the subway home to the soundtrack of Green Day and set up her sewing machine. Eddie and Richie would be the first ones home in about four hours.

She cut up the flannels, pulled out the huge sack of rice they kept in the kitchen and got to work on gift number one. After making the shirts into nice, neat squares, she divided them into two even groups and sewed the squares into two equal giant squares. Then, she sewed three of those edges together, making a big old pocket. She began to fill the pocket with rice, sewing dividers every so often until she had a lovely weighted flannel blanket. She had gone through one playlist, fifty flannels, and a lot of rice. She had two hours.

Next was a bowtie for Stan, which she started by sewing the material- which was pleasantly thick- into two double-sided squares. Then she cut the center band, added the clip, realized she screwed up and started over. She always bought extra material- either for future projects or messed up ones. She re-sewed the squares and the middle band, this time by hand in her neat stitches, and then attached the metal clip exactly the way Instructables.com told her to. She ironed it out perfectly, attached the middle band, and she had made her first bowtie, with an hour and fifteen minutes to spare! She wrapped it and set it next to the wrapped-up blanket in the cabinet under the bathroom sink, where she kept feminine products and where the boys never went, except Stan once a month for his bathroom cleaning and he had done that on Monday.

To wrap it up, she sewed the basic bags for Mike and Ben, and my the time the boys arrived home, she was looking at embroidery ideas online.

"I'm making dinner tonight," Richie said. "I'm making stir fry with rice."

"We're out of rice!" Bev said hurriedly. "I can grab some."

"I'll come with you," Eddie volunteered and they walked down to the corner store together. Bev loved the Christmas lights that wrapped around the trees on their street. In the dark, they looked like they were ghosts of trees, standing on their own. Eddie caught her little smile.

"So the Richie thing," he sighed as they walked. "It's getting weird."

"Has it ever not been weird?" she asked.

"Okay, fair point, but he's just so aggressively cuddly and tactile that it's hard to deny my feelings for him and stuff! You try to tell yourself you're not, like, borderline in love with someone when they decide the best solution to the lack of seats on the subway is you sitting on their lap while they hold you around the waist?"

"Oh my god, he did that?"

"Yes!" Eddie cried. "People weren't, like, looking at us weird either! It was like we do that every Wednesday on the commute home, and it was so fuckin' domestic I couldn't take it!"

They were in the shop now, and Bev and Eddie each grabbed a side of the bag of rice and heaved it on the counter to pay. Then they began to drag it home.

"And- and- and I'm not sure if it's worse that he does it to everyone, or better. because, like, yeah, when I see him wrap his arms around Bill's waist like they're married and whatever, it's like *oh okay nothing to worry about*. And then two seconds later he's all *Eddie come sit on my lap on the subway because there are no more seats left*, and I do of course, and then when I see him do the thing to Bill later it feels like Richie's putting my heart through that automatic orange juicer Mike bought! Why did I fall in possible love with Richie Tozier, for god's sake, the most confusing man on the planet? You got Ben, who just writes you a poem and you're in love forever, but noooooo," he prattled on as they carted the rice up the steps and into the house.

They dumped it on the floor, and Bev saw Eddie's face go from annoyed to the softest expression on earth as Richie wrapped his arms around Eddie's chest, tucked his chin on Eddie's head, and

stayed there while asking Bev about her day off.

December 6th ended with the Losers enjoying dinner together, and Richie and Eddie sitting suspiciously close.

Notes for the Chapter:

who they told about their crushes: a summary

richie: ben, stan

eddie: bev

stan: richie, ben

bill: nobody yet but he's gonna tell richie

bev: eddie

ben: richie and stan

6. Chapter 6

December 7th, a Wednesday, was rather nice for December. Mike Hanlon was in his anthropology class, and there was a window in the classroom. On a tree outside, a bird was perched in a nest and he sent a picture to both Stan and Bill. Stan replied with the correct species and facts about the bird, and Bill replied that he wanted to draw it.

The class was a lot of fun. Mike wanted to be a history teacher someday; back in Derry they had had a great history teacher named Mr Potts that got even Richie engaged in the class. Mike wanted to be that someday, to make students want to learn, and he wanted to even go back to Derry to do it and be an adult that *understood*. Back when the Losers lived there, life had been a daily torture for almost all of them and Mike wanted to go back, discipline the kids that bullied and comfort the ones that were bullied. He even had plans to start an African-American Student Leadership Club, as well as one for Jewish kids in Derry, after he and Stan had bonded over being the only kids who were *different* in their class.

He was still thinking about the logistics of these hypothetical clubs- if Stan for some reason moved back, he could be a mentor!- when the class ended and he met up with Ben outside his design class. Ben was beaming, holding some plans for something in his hands, and when they finally sat down at the Panera Bread ten minutes later, he unrolled them to reveal a library.

"See, it's the Derry library, but I made it better and more open and less creepy. Do you remember when that guy was staring at us weird when we were eighth graders, and then he asked us if we wanted to go check out some books in his car?" Ben explained.

"Oh my gosh, yes!" Mike said. "And we were like 'no friggin way, dude' and then Bev showed up in the nick of time as he was backing us towards the autobirgraphies, and she was like 'Andrew! Shawn! Dad is looking for you guys!' and acted like you were her brother and I was your friend?" Ben laughed at the memory, softening at the mention of Bev. Ben ordered a BLT, Mike got some mac and cheese, and they also picked up a baguette for dinner.

"How many inappropriate jokes will Richie make about this baguette?" Mike asked once they found seats.

"Like, seven before we've even set the table. And then Eddie will beep him."

"Richie barely opens his mouth and Eddie beeps him," Mike pointed out. Just then, his phone buzzed. It was Bill, in his art class, with a rough sketch of the bird and tree.

Bill > birddoodle.png

Stan > Oh my gosh, Bill! That's really good!

Mike > Yeah, Bill, thats awesome!

Mike > Really good -Ben

Bill > omg thank you :,)

"Watch Bill get an A-plus in that class despite only turning in doodles of the Losers doing funny things and photos that Stan sends him," Ben laughed, taking a bite of BLT. Mike's mac and cheese came with a slice of baguette, and so he made a macaroni sandwich. They ate in silence for a bit, Mike texting intermittently with Bill and Stan, and then Ben spoke.

"I need help, Mike. I don't have a gift for Bev."

"Okay, but why me?"

"You're amazing at gifts? For example, what are you getting for everyone?"

"A book by a writer on The Simpsons for Rich, the Humans of New York book for Bev, Good Omens for Bill, one of those statistic books for Eddie, and John Muir's book My First Summer In The Sierra for

Stanley."

"See? Perfect!"

Mike just grinned. "So what does Bev like? I mean, you know her better than any of us."

"Um, her favorite show is The Good Place. She wants to be a fashion designer. She loves the Andrew Garfield Spider-Man movies the most, and she loves it when you put almonds in the green beans."

"She likes my almond green beans? Aww, Bevvv!" Mike cooed. "But, um, that's not important. I don't think that you want to get her an Eleanor Shellstrop t-shirt or Spider-Man poster or whatever, so are there any memories you guys have? Like, there's that one episode of The Office where Jim gets Pam a teapot that she's been wanting, and inside he fills it up with inside jokes and reminders of little moments they've shared over the years. It's nice because sure, Pam's not gonna use those random hot sauce packets, but it's the thought that counts. And she gets a nice teapot that she can use."

"That's... a really good idea! I could get her a new bag and fill it with a bunch of memories!" Ben said excitedly, his face lighting up. Mike smiled at his enthusiasm.

"OK, so we can make a list of things to include..."

--

Later, though, in a lecture, Mike had an even better idea for Ben. They had made up a pretty good list at Panera, but seeing as how Ben and Beverly were the only two of his dumbass pining best friends to get their romantic shit together, Mike had a lot of time and energy to focus on counseling their relationship.

Mike > Better gift idea

Mike > If you are busy you don't have to reply rn

Ben > No im in a lecture rn!

Ben > And any help is appreciated!!

Mike > Ok ok so instead of giving her a gift she'll use give her like an experience

Mike > like plan a road trip, find fun places to visit, and then when it's over she'll probs make a scrapbook out of it

Ben > She does love her scrapbooks :)

Mike > Her and stanley both lol

Mike > But anyways! you could even plan it up the east coast and back, skipping maine ofc

Mike > Sorry i'm planning your romantic road trip for you haha

Ben > no please continue

Ben > you're better at this than me

Mike > haystack all you need to do is take my template and plug in the Benverly parts

Ben > Benverly??????

Mike > nvm. but we'll talk tonight!

Ben > Yeah! See you tonight :))

--

That night, Ben sat at the table while Mike made dinner. The rest of their roommates are either working or not home yet, so they were undisturbed.

"Okay, so we could go to a coastal town. It'll still be pretty but not touristy because it's winter and there would be tourist things to do."

"I love it," Mike said slowly as he stirred his tomato sauce. He was really concentrating hard.

"Or we could go south? Georgia?"

"Georgia?"

"I dunno, it's the first southern state I thought of!" Ben defended. "Ugh. I don't know how to plan a romantic road trip getaway. Can't I just wait to plan it until she knows and then she can help me?"

"Oh my gosh. Yeah, man. Beverly Marsh would love to co-plan her own Christmas gift." Mike started to laugh. "WE spent all this time and she already probably has emergency road trip plans saved on her laptop somewhere."

Ben laughed too. "Remember the day we all met? I was getting carved like a fuckin Thanksgiving turkey, and Richie and Eddie were trying to get me bandaids, and Bev was like 'welcome to the wonderful world of Theft!'"

"And then I walked by them all trying to patch you up and was like 'yeah only two of these people know what they're doing and one of them has a large knife wound, better step in.'"

December 7th ended with them all asleep early. Mike and Bill watched Brooklyn 99 for a bit but Bill had finished all his work, Mike didn't have anything, and Georgie was visiting the day after tomorrow. Life wasn't just good, life was currently fucking excellent.

Mike's last thought before he drifted off was "now that Ben and Bev are good, I got to get started on Richie and Eddie."

7. Chapter 7

Notes for the Chapter:

hello- i have decided that i'm just going to post the day's chapter the next day, so here will be a chapter every night about what happened the day before.

It was first grade, Derry Elementary, Miss Kitt's class. Eddie was out sick, again. This was normal, Eddie was sick a lot and the teacher didn't even get mad at him when he was gone for a while- there was a note in his file and he had a fanny pack full of medicine and everything. But Eddie had been sick for three full days, and so at art hour (which was forty-five minutes) Bill and Richie and Stan convened to discuss the situation.

"I bet he's just recovering," Stan said. "His mom keeps him out of school to recover a lot."

"I really miss him though," Richie whined.

"You really miss him whenever he does anything without you!" Bill laughed.

"Yeah, but I love him so it's okay," Richie defended.

"You can't be in love with Eddie!" Bill said.

"Why not?" Richie asked.

"Because we're seven, and we aren't old enough to be in love." Bill knew these things because he was the leader, he was the oldest and the tallest and he had a baby brother that he helped take care of, and so Stan nodded and Richie said: "okay, but I still really miss him!". Bill forgot it, Stan forgot it, and Eddie had never known the conversation happened in the first place, but it had stuck in Richie's head for some reason and it came to mind on December 8th, a Thursday morning, as he walked with Eddie in the falling snow.

What about now, William? he thought. *Am I old enough to love Eddie now?*

Because after the day Eddie was out sick, there was the time Richie kissed a papercut on his finger. There was the time Eddie had to join the girls in square-dancing because there was an uneven number and Richie had "reluctantly" volunteered to be his partner and between Stan and Patty, and Bill and Audra, they had awkwardly placed hands on waists and spun around the multipurpose room until the bell rang. There was the day in the arcade when Henry Bowers called Richie words that made him shiver to this very day, there had been the day by the quarry with Bill and Stan, there were nights spent sneaking Eddie out of his room and showing him the best night-time adventures Derry had to offer, there were moments stolen while they brushed their teeth side-by-side and made faces at each other, there had been a few nights ago when Eddie had shared Richie's roomy twin bed and despite Eddie stealing Richie's side of the bed (back corner, back against the wall, facing away from the wall) and stealing all the blankets, Richie knew he had been looking at him with a look on his face that topped any romance film in history.

They strolled along, not talking, respective earbuds in, and when Eddie raised a hand to say goodbye as Richie dropped him off, he grinned and Richie grinned back. Then, Richie set off back to the house. he didn't even have a class on Thursday morning. he just wanted to walk Eddie to class. He decided to stop at the store to grab some snacks so he could eat and get some work done before going to an afternoon class. And it was in the store that he saw it- the greatest romantic plot device known to man.

Mistletoe.

Early on, Richie had realized that if he only hugged Eddie, only teased Eddie, only acted affectionate with Eddie, he was a) being obvious about his crush and b) making both him and Eddie easy targets. So he adjusted his strategy: he kissed Bev on the cheek in greeting, he draped himself all over Bill's back when they stood around, he sat in Stanley's lap and played with Ben's hair and propped his chin on Mike's shoulder and if he did all of that to Eddie? Well, he was just Like That with all his friends! He could never completely stop the teasing, so he might as well roll with it.

So Richie bought mistletoe for every door in the house. He hung it above the door to the dining room, the kitchen, to Ben and Bev's

room, Mike and Bill's, and his and Stan and Eddie's. He wrote a few jokes and went to his class.

Richie returned home to Eddie standing in the living room with an exasperated look on his face.

"Really, asshole? Mistletoe?"

"Eddie Spaghetti, you wound me. I didn't do this!"

'Richie Bitchie, you were the only one home between me leaving and me getting home."

"Beep-beep, Eddie," Richie said.

"You don't get to fucking beep me! I beep you!" Eddie genuinely sounded offended.

"You don't get to give me nicknames, then."

"Okay, Richard," Eddie smirked and pushed past Richie into the dining room, throwing a dirty look over his shoulder as he started to get his notes ready.

God, Richie loved him.

--

Despite Eddie's lackluster reaction, the rest of the Losers thought the mistletoe was pretty funny. Ben and Bev kissed in the doorway to the kitchen and Mike pecked Richie on the cheek in the dining room and Stan kissed Bill on the nose in the entryway to Stan's room where they were studying, which made them both blush and avoid eye contact for fifteen minutes.

Richie, for his part, dipped Beverly under the dining room door to plant one right on the tip of her freckled nose. He leaned close to Mike, he pecked Ben and he smacked a kiss right onto Stan's forehead, while the latter sighed with a smile at his best friend. Bill was annoyed he had to go on tiptoe to gingerly kiss Richie on the cheek, and the fact that he was that much taller made Richie smile

more than the kiss did. But Eddie avoided Richie and doorways like he had the Black Plague. That was the bruise on the apple, the fly in the ointment, the... bad thing in the day that was otherwise great.

Richie did have all month to get the job done, but he didn't want to make Eddie uncomfortable, so he could wordlessly take it all down, but then someone would call him out, he could tell Eddie he didn't want to make him uncomfortable and apologize, but he couldn't say "hey bro I just wanted to smash my face into your face like I've been wanting to do since before either of us can remember, you know like bros do sometimes."

So Richie did what Richie did best- he made dumb jokes, set the dinner table, and purposely stepped on Eddie's foot under the table because even though he was turning twenty this year, he was a boy on the playground pulling a girl's pigtails at heart. And after dinner, while Stan and Mike stood side-by-side and washed the dishes, Richie did some homework and lay in his bed with a Queen record on.

"Knock-knock?" It was Bill.

"Billy boy!" Richie grinned. Bill looked around, closed the door, and ran to jump on the end of Richie's bed, face down, looking as if he had just crossed a desert.

"Bill? Are you alright?" Richie asked nervously.

"No, I'm not alright," Bill hissed. "I'm having a goddamned *sexuality crisis*, Richie, and since you're the only person I know who's had one of these thoroughly unpleasant experiences, I really could use some help!"

"What?"

"So I'm having my weekly platonic lunch date with Stanley, and we're sitting across from each other in the school cafeteria, and I just realize holy shit. Stan is really pretty? Or handsome? I dunno? Anyways, he was talking about birds, and he gets so passionate about birds and nature that he should become some sort of nature guy, like a more zen Steve Irwin, but he's becoming an accountant, and so I was realizing that I had a crush on Stan, and then I was like 'ok bye

nice seeing you' and bolted."

"Bruh,' Richie said starting to laugh. "But seriously, Bill, do you really like Stan?"

'Richie, that's what I'm here to ask you. Here, I, um, made a list." Bill ran to his room and returned with his American Literature notebook. "Read this."

Richie did and started to giggle again, but this time in disbelief. "Matt Dillon? From Outsiders? Bill, Patrick Swayze was right there!..... ok but the Keira Knightly thing is valid..... yeah Stan is warm and soft when he's asleep, that's the only time I can tolerate him- KIDDING! Geez, Bill, I was kidding, you know Stanley the Manly's like a brother to me. And also congrats, you're probably bi."

" WHAT? "

"Bill, honestly, I love you as much as I love Stan. If Eddie's my unrequited crush/possible future boyfriend and Stan's my brother, you're my best friend. You're Big Bill! The fearless leader! You made us break into Henry's creepy hideout on Neibolt Street when we were twelve to rescue your kidnapped brother! If you're going to be intimidated by a boy, that boy shouldn't be Stanley Uris, the boy who as we speak is doing his weekly jigsaw puzzle with Ben and Eddie and listening to Vampire Weekend. I get the whole never-ever-in-your-life-telling-the-boy-you-like-him thing but don't let it intimidate you or scare you, either. And don't come out right now if you're not ready."

Bill wasn't tearing up but his eyes were glassy. "Thank you, Rich." They hugged for a minute, then Richie stopped.

"Wait- what do you think of this song?" He tapped around on his phone, turned the record player off, and hit play on Spotify.

All I am is a man

I want the world in my hands

I hate the beach

But I stand in California with my toes in the sand

"Oh, this is Sweater Weather! I love this song!"

Richie grinned. "Yeah, you're bi."

Later that night, right before midnight, Richie was in the dark kitchen. After the Eddie thing, the Bill-and-Stan thing, he couldn't be expected to sleep. He had run out of melatonin and was considering finding a 24-hour pharmacy to get some, but at the moment he was sitting on the counter sipping some tea. He was not an herbal tea person, although Stan and Eddie were, he preferred coffee, but this Sleepytime blend should help with insomnia. he was humming to himself, thinking of ways to try to get Stan to make the first move on Bill when he heard a noise. Eddie, in his matching pajama set and messy hair, apparently with the same idea as Richie.

"Hey," Richie said. he could make some sort of dirty joke out of this situation but it didn't seem like the time, so he kept it at that.

"Hey." Eddie looked drained, absolutely drained, as he refilled the kettle and set it on the stove. He boosted himself up to sit beside Richie.

"So, um, Georgie comes in tomorrow," Richie said to fill the silence.

"Yeah. Stan and I were talking about skipping school so we could get ready, hang out. Bill will probably be game for it, and you're invited to skip school with us too."

"Wait- Georgie gets here at, like, six p.m. none of us have class then-"

"Bill said, and I quote, 'we're just looking for an excuse to skip school'. And besides, how long has it been since the core four Losers hung out?"

"Well, I won't pass up on an opportunity to cut class and spend the day with four of my favorite boys." The kettle whistled, Eddie made his tea, and they sipped at their mugs together, quietly making small

talk until the mugs were empty. Once they were, they started out of the kitchen- and there was that dumb sprig of mistletoe.

Eddie paused.

Richie stopped.

Eddie went up on his tiptoes.

Chapped lips met the very corner of Richie's mouth- not his cheek, not his lips-

And Eddie was up the stairs as Richie just *stood there*. Eddie had kissed him. Holy shit.

December 8th ended as Richie just kept standing in the kitchen doorway, eyes wide, processing his entire fucking insane day, and Eddie processed what he had just done, and then he pretended to be asleep while Richie came upstairs and lay in his bed.

Neither of them fell asleep before five in the morning.

Notes for the Chapter:

yeah they're all gay
keep scrolling

also poor stan,,, he's liked bill for y e a r s and bill's like "huh maybe straight people just fantasize about kissing their best friend and moving into a small minimalist apartment with them and adopting three dogs together sometimes. just friends being friends:)"

8. Chapter 8

It was December 9th, a Friday, and Bill was up with Mike at the alarm. While Mike buttoned his flannel shirt and tucked it into his jeans before tying his hiking boots, Bill let his flannel hang open over his undershirt and just went downstairs in socks. Stan was there already, dressed casually (for Stan, that is. He was wearing nice black jeans and a baby-blue button-down, and his non-school backpack.) and ready to go with herbal tea.

"You're skipping too?" Mike asked with a nod.

"Yeah. I mean, we go on break for three weeks starting Monday, so I won't be missing much, but yeah. Oh! Bill, I started the coffee." Stan smiled. Bill's heart did a little front roll in his chest, and he turned around to pour some coffee into Richie's WORLD'S BEST BOSS mug. Eddie and Richie ran downstairs next- Richie in skinny jeans, converse, and a shirt patterned with loud sunflowers, Eddie in a pastel sweatshirt and jeans- and Richie sipped a Red Bull while Eddie drank some tea. Mike left after a quick goodbye, Bev and Ben did too after reminding them to give Georgie bug hugs when he got there.

The boys decided to go out to breakfast at Leo's Coney Island. It was kind of an awkward meal because Eddie was avoiding looking at Richie, and Bill was avoiding looking at Stan, so Stan and Richie looked at each other and Bill looked at the menu and Eddie looked at the coffee-creamer tower he made. The waiter came, and they ordered their usual food: eggs and bacon for Bill, a HealthyOption™ for Eddie, a vegetarian omelet for Stan, and a coffee and patty melt for Richie. When the food arrived, the awkward silence was finally broken by Eddie.

"What do you suggest I order, Eds?" Richie asked, sounding annoyed but being betrayed by the huge smile on his face.

"Um, breakfast food?"

"Just because you said that we're having pancakes for dinner."

"No, we aren't!" Bill cut in. "We're having Georgie's favorite,

shepherd's pie. Also, Stan? Can you teach me how to make shepherd's pie?" He grinned sheepishly.

Stan's face subtly lit up. "Yeah, I can find a recipe. Also, they gave me way too many hash browns, so if anyone wants them-

"Mine." Bill scooped half the hash browns onto his plate, sprinkled them liberally with salt and pepper, and shoveled them into his mouth. Stan smiled a soft little smile despite the potato that clung to Bill's cheek.

After they finished their meal, they went to the sewing store. Beverly's sewing machine was on its last legs, a relic from their high school days, and so the four of them had saved up to buy her a new one. They had researched a lovely newer model with the fancy lettering and pattern functions, and they picked it up today. Then they had to race back home to hide it in Richie's pants drawer, and then they headed back out for more fun times.

"We should see a movie!" Eddie said. "That new Mark Ruffalo one!"

Because nobody knew of any other movies that were showing, they saw the Mark Ruffalo one. Eddie and Stan thoroughly enjoyed it, Richie didn't care, and Bill thought it was okay. Richie managed to consume an entire large popcorn and Junior Mints and then part of the popcorn Eddie and Bill were sharing too, and they were all so impressed at him they forgot to be annoyed. They walked around the city for a while after that, taking aesthetic photos and making fun of advertisements and people. Richie wrapped his arm around Eddie and the latter didn't even notice (he noticed actually) and Stan bumped his hip into Bill's to sneakily point that out. And then it was four p.m., and they were going to be late to being early to pick up Georgie.

They all took a cab to the station, and Richie sat in front and chatted to the driver about absolutely nothing (Richie liked the sound of his voice). They pulled up at about four-forty-five and waited around for a while for the train. They wanted to be early in case Georgie was early, or something happened, and it beat walking around a cold city

in December, so. Here they were.

Richie bought a newspaper and read it aloud while laying on a bench, doing funny voices the whole time, while Eddie and Stan worried about germs and Bill texted Georgie.

Bill > How close are you?

Georgie > very

Bill > That's not helpful

Georgie > like 20 mins

Georgie > see ya then

Bill > See you then!!

Twenty minutes later, Georgie had arrived. He sprinted off the train, dragging his little suitcase behind him, and was about to hug Bill when Richie stepped between the brothers, picked up Georgie, and yelled "GEORGIE, M'BOY!" Georgie laughed, and when Richie dropped him, he ran to hug Bill, then Eddie, then Stan.

They took a taxi home, and Eddie went grocery shopping for the shepherd's pies while Georgie reunited with the other losers. Then Bill made the pies with a lot of friendly touches and helpful smiles from Stan, and Mike set the table. Georgie loved the shepherd's pies and everyone else tactfully ignored the disaster that was the crust, and in general, it was a lively dinner.

December 9th ended with Georgie fast asleep, Bill scrolling his Instagram on the couch, and Richie and Eddie trying to pick which museum to go to tomorrow.

Notes for the Chapter:

i'm very sorry it got hurried at the end but in my defense i was sleepy

i would also like everyone to know that bill was the tallest one in the losers club until they were in eighth grade and then he just. stopped growing and everyone passed him in height except eddie (and even eddie's almost the same height as him) and it's the worst thing in his life and richie uses his head as an armrest.

9. Chapter 9

On December 10, Stanley was awake at the same time he was always awake. It was a lovely Saturday morning, as lovely as it could be in December in New York, he was going to spend the entire day doing fun touristy things with his best friends and his favorite middle-schooler in the world, and Ben had remembered to do the laundry last night so his favorite shirt was clean. Life was going well.

Instead of shaking Bill and Georgie awake (they were taking over his room for the weekend), he quietly turned on Richie's Ziggy Stardust record and then tiptoed down the hallway to wake up the rest of his friends. He flickered the lights in Ben and Bev's room where they were squished together in Ben's bed- he didn't know why they had bothered to get two- and smiled as Bev shook her red hair out of her eyes and smiled back at him. In Mike's room, where Eddie was occupying Bill's bed, he shook Mike awake gently and mouthed "can you get Eddie up?", to which Mike answered with a nod.

With Richie, though, Stan showed no mercy- he queued up All-Star on his Spotify, held the phone up to Richie's ear, blasted it at full volume, and was still running around the house as his best friend chased him when Bill came down with Georgie.

Bill was wearing his usual outfit template: flannel unbuttoned over a t-shirt and jeans. Stan had never seen him button that flannel up. Georgie was wearing a sweatshirt with R2-D2 on it and jeans with his boots. Stan decided to ignore how ridiculously cute Bill looked with the collar of his flannel rumpled and his morning hair all fluffy and say to Georgie, "Props on the hoodie, but C-3PO is better."

Georgie squawked in indignation. "Is not! R2-D2 got things done more!"

"Are we arguing over Star Wars droids?" Bev asked, waltzing into the kitchen. "Because BB-8 is the best and most amazing droid in the galaxy."

"He hasn't done as much as Artoo or Threepio, though!" Bill said.

"You don't have all the facts."

"Which are?"

"I love him," Bev said simply as she swished into the kitchen in her floaty, twirly dress thing. Stan was pretty sure she had made it herself.

Once Richie, Eddie, Ben, and Mike were dressed, they debated whether or not to go out for breakfast.

"I think we should stay here. It's Saturday morning, it'll be crowded everywhere," Eddie said as his eyes said *we can't keep living semi-comfortably if we just eat at restaurants every day of the week*. Richie seconded that, to nobody's surprise, and helped make blue pancakes and milk and unholy amounts of coffee. They set out at about ten a.m.

First off, they decided to go to Central Park. They took the crowded subway, with Bill and Stan holding handrails and Georgie holding Bill and Stan's hands, Bev and Ben squeezed into one seat, Mike with earbuds in and Eddie on Richie's lap to "conserve space". Richie made a total of zero dirty jokes for the whole trip, Eddie shared an earbud with him, and Bill texted Stan **so the blush on their cheeks is the cold right?** Stan replied, **Yes, Bill! It's very cold!** They made eye contact and giggled.

Once their stop arrived at the park, Georgie kept between the two boys. Stan was reminded of a memory from when they were maybe fourteen, Georgie was seven, and they were holding his hands down Main Street as they took him to get a burger from the diner.

"It's like you guys are married and you're both my dad! And I'm your son!" Georgie had laughed, and Stan had looked around to make sure nobody had heard him. He had half-expected to look back to see Bill giving Georgie a stern talk about the Dangers Of Homosexuality and why he was most definitely not married to Stan, boys didn't marry other boys, that was wrong-

Bill was just laughing at Georgie. "Son, if you don't eat your entire

hamburger, you don't get to split a chocolate milkshake with Stanley."

"You mean Daddy! Or Papa!"

"You don't get to split a milkshake with Papa." Bill looked at Stan and gave him a secret sort of smile that Stan couldn't decipher but that filled his chest with a warm feeling that wasn't just the late June weather.

But back in New York- Georgie was in between Stan and Bill, and Bev and Ben were strolling arm-in-arm like a married couple, and Eddie was yelling at Richie for not wearing a proper jacket, and Mike was just smiling and taking photos of the trees and the people and them.

"You're all acting like married couples," Mike commented as he checked out a picture he had snapped of a frost-encrusted leaf. "Seriously."

"We are not," Eddie said indignantly, blushing again. he did that a lot when he was around Richie.

"You so are," ben said with a grin. Eddie just threw a little snowball, and Georgie broke free to throw one at Eddie, and Richie couldn't resist joining in with Bev, and Bill shoved some snow into Mike's gloves. They were seven almost-twenty-year-olds, who were the guardians of a small child, who paid a mortgage and bills and taxes, and they were having a snowball fight in the middle of Central Park.

Mike saw the zoo was open first and grabbed Georgie to drag him over and see the animals. They paid admission, and Bill snapped pictures of the animals to draw later, and Georgie and Mike memorized and regurgitated every fun fact they learned. Stan made friends with a sea lion, and then Bill suggested they go warm up in a museum.

"Okay, which one?" Eddie asked, which opened up a floodgate of answers.

"Guggenheim!" Ben suggested while Bill said

"MOMA!" and Richie yelled

"The Natural History Museum" and Bev called out

"The City of New York!"

"CALM DOWN!" STan yelled, which shut them all up. "Georgie, where do you want to go?"

"Um," he hedged, "City of New York. Sorry, guys!" Bev rushed to hug him.

"Let's go!" Richie cheered, setting off. Eddie stopped him.

"You're going to walk, Rich? Walk from one end of Central Park to the other? IN December?"

"...yes?"

"It's a forty-five-minute walk."

"Eds, I'm gay, so we know that means forty minutes."

"You're *bisexual*, 'Chee, and we're not walking. We're taking the bus."

"But Eddie-"

They took the bus.

--

Once they got to the museum, they split up (unsurprisingly). Bev and Eddie took Georgie to an exhibit about the history of the city, Mike and Stanley went to the Labor Movement exhibit, Ben wandered off to the part dedicated to the World's Fair, and Bill followed Richie as he beelined for a special exhibit about the Stonewall Riots.

Richie looked so noble- standing there in front of a multitude of flags, cuffed jeans and hoodie hanging off his shoulders and headphones dangling around his neck- that Bill snapped a picture to draw later. Then he joined Richie as his friend "initiated a new bisexual in his history"; it was stuff Bill had heard before but felt a new sense of,

well, pride in as Richie recited the stories of Marsha Johnson and Sylvia Rivera straight off the top of his head. They found Bev and Eddie in the 1930s, Eddie rambling about the Great Depression, Bev and Georgie half-paying attention.

"Great Depression? Eddie Spaghetti, you sound like my therapist!"

"Beepity-beep, Richard! You can't make depression jokes in public, people worry!" Beverly stage-whispered as she glanced at an alarmed family standing a few feet away.

"Yeah, Richie, wait until we get home to cope with your mental health issues via jokes and comedy," Bill said.

"Can we get lunch now?" Georgie asked.

"Yeah, Billy. Can we get lunch now?" Richie made pleading Bambi eyes that Bill ignored.

"Sure, George"

Bill > Meet at the front entrance, we're getting lunch.

Stan > Where?

Bill > Idk, we'll vote on it

Ben > OK, there in like 5mins

Mike > Can we get pizza

Bill looked up. "Thoughts on pizza for lunch?"

"Sure!"

Bill > yeah sure

Mike and his research of literally everything took them to the oldest pizza place in New York.

"It was founded in 1905 by an immigrant," Mike said, bouncing on

the balls of his feet.

'Cool. Does it have good pizza?" Richie asked.

"Um, yes. It does."

They ordered and ate crammed into a booth, and then set out for the city again.

"Georgie, what do you want to do?" Ben asked.

"I read on the way here about the ferry?"

--

Eddie did not like taxis. He didn't like trusting some random guy with his life, he didn't like crumbs on the seats, he didn't like squeezing into one with seven other people. He was, however, perfectly fine with listening to The All-American rejects while Richie was half sitting on his lap and Bev looked at them knowingly. He had kissed Richie in a moment of *something*, and he had laid awake for a few hours after that, thinking up possible scenarios of what would happen next.

1) He wakes up and starts dating Richie [best case]

2) He wakes up and they never mention it again [neutral case]

3) He wakes up and Richie hates him [worst case ever]

Currently, they were at 2. Eddie was grateful.

"Excited for the ferry, boys?" Mike asks, sounding like a dad.

"I've never been on one," Eddie answers.

"Well, you'll love it."

Eddie did not love it. It was dirty and grimy, there were no seatbelts, they were on open water, and there was an extensive safety

presentation that did not leave Eddie feeling safe. He felt his shoulders tense, his jaw tighten, felt a warm weight settle around his shoulders?

Richie.

"Edssssssssssss," he grumbled. "I'm cold."

"You didn't bring a cost, dumbass," Eddie said (but he could feel some stress go away).

"Spare warmth?" Richie said in a dumb Cockney accent and Eddie unzipped his jacket opened his arms, and let Richie fall into them. He zipped up the coat with Richie inside and felt the vibrations of Richie's voice go through his chest.

"So where are we going?"

"Nowhere," Eddie said as he awkwardly checked the pamphlet. "We're sightseeing via boat. It's for tourists."

"Is Georgie enjoying it?"

Eddie looked over at where the younger Denbrough brother was plastered to the window.

"Yeah, he is."

--

They went ice-skating because they could. It was ten p.m. and people were starting to leave, they would almost have the rink to themselves.

"This is, like, a tourist must-do," Stan explained to Georgie as they all laced on ice skates "Stay close to me and Bill, now"

Stan, Bill, and Georgie were the first ones on the rink, the younger boy between his brother and his brother's... who even knew. Richie saw Mike snap a photo, and text it to the group chat.

Mike > billandstanandgeorgie.png

Mike > two dads teaching their son to ice skate

Bill > asderfkgfjbgvwhjrf shut up

Richie and Eddie were next, Richie sure and confident from years of winter ice hockey in Derry, Eddie wobbly from years of sitting on the sidelines. They clung to each other as they went around the circle of ice. Bev and Mike were next, both were adequately good from ice hockey (Mike) and roller skating (Bev). Ben was last, shaky but Trying His Best.

"I don't like this very much," Eddie said after a while. "It's hard. And don't even think about making that joke!" he added because Richie had opened his mouth.

"Here, hold on to my arm instead of the side. We can go more towards the middle," Richie suggested. Eddie did, and Richie slowly brought him out to the middle where Bev was attempting spins alone. They went in little circles, while Georgie raced Bill and Stan cheered, while Ben and Mike leisurely circled the rink, chatting. Richie stopped for a second, Eddie stopping with him.

"What's up?" he asked.

"I dunno," Richie said slowly. "I just... wow. We're here, in New York, Rockefeller Center at midnight, alone, all seven- eight- of us together, and- this makes no sense, sorry."

"No. I understand," Eddie said "Bev and I escaped from our parents, Mike and Stan escaped from what was basically persecution, Ben and Bill escaped from their heads, you escaped from suffocation, you were suffocating in Derry. Georgie- he escaped from an abandoned basement and a psychopath. We're alive."

"Yeah," Richie said quietly. "We are." They stood there for a minute longer, center ice: looking at Bev, who was free and brave and finally unleashed on the world; looking at Ben who was happy and smiling and who didn't listen to other people; looking at Stan, who lit the

Hannukah candles and made a seder with Mike and who volunteered at the JCC summer camps and helped kids; Mike who was doing the same thing in schools and working as a TA in a high school class and trying to make the world better for kids today than it was for them. At Bill who was finally relaxing and Georgie who was safe. Riche looked at Eddie and Eddie looked at Richie.

It struck midnight.

December 10th was over.

10. Chapter 10

December 11th technically started with Stan hustling Georgie and Bill off the ice at Rockefeller Center, telling them all they needed to get home and get some sleep. Because they were all tired anyway, they went along with him, and both Bill and Georgie fell asleep on Stan's shoulders on the subway home.

When Bill woke up to his head resting on Stan's shoulder, Georgie on the other, his first thought was to sit up and apologize. But then he heard Stan saying, "Rich, keep it down. eddie's asleep, and so are my boys-"

" *Your boys?*"

"Shut up, Rich."

So Bill shut his eyes again and stayed asleep until he was woken by Ben shaking him. It was their stop.

They trudged through the snow to the house, where he dimly remembered getting undressed and in bed, and then it was late morning.

He blinked a few times and then sat up in Eddie's bed. Georgie and Stan were gone, downstairs most likely, and so he made the bed and ran down the stairs in slippers and his pajama pants.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't Sleeping Beauty," Mike laughed from the head of the table, where he was serving pancakes. Richie was checking his phone, Bev was half-asleep, Ben was reading, Georgie was chatting to Stan and Mike, and Eddie was leaning his head on Richie's shoulder. Bill sat in between Stan and Eddie, stacked pancakes on his plate, and drowned them in syrup.

Eddie cocked an eyebrow. "Having some pancakes with that syrup,

William?"

"You sound like Richie," Bill said and Eddie stuck his tongue out at him. "Stan, Georgie, why didn't you two wake me up?"

"We were going to, but Stanley said you looked too peaceful," Georgie started. Stan turned red.

"Um, you were so tired last night too, and you stay up late so much, so we decided..." Stan started.

"It's fine. Thanks, guys." Bill smiled at them, and they both smiled back.

"So, what're we doing today?" Richie asked with a mouth full of pancakes.

"I don't know," Mike said. "We could just hang around here, do Christmas things?"

"Ooh! Back in Derry, we always watch the best Christmas movies leading up to Christmas Eve? Can we stay here and watch movies?" Georgie asked.

"Bill? Thoughts?" Mike raised his eyebrows.

"I'd be down to do that if you guys are."

"Let's do it! All-day movie marathon, stay in pajamas, make popcorn, make Richie brave the cold to get us unhealthy snacks!" Bev cheered.

So they stayed in pajamas. The only one who changed was Bill, who pulled on a shirt, and then Georgie carried all the blankets in the house to the couches. They rearranged the living room and made a cozy movie nest, while Ben popped all the microwave popcorn in the house and Richie ran to grab cookies and other assorted holiday treats.

"Okay!" he said as he stepped in the door. "They didn't have any, quote-unquote, holiday snacks, but they did help me get the things I needed to make, quote-unquote, holiday snacks. So! Who's going to help me make holiday snacks?"

Mike, unsurprisingly, helped Richie with the snacks. They dumped the cereal, pretzels, peanuts, and M&Ms into a bag, added some melted white chocolate, shook it up, and poured it into a bowl. Not even Richie could manage to make it "fun and exciting".

Meanwhile, the rest of the Losers Club had gotten comfortable. Bev and Ben had taken one of the couches over, Eddie was wrapped in blankets on the other, and Bill and Georgie, were laying on the floor, and Stan was sitting in the corner formed by the couches. Richie plopped himself with the bowl of snack mix next to Eddie, Mike sat down with Georgie and some popcorn, and they started Home Alone.

Georgie and Richie could recite the entire film from memory. halfway through, while the burglars were following Kevin on the way home from the supermarket, Stan spoke up.

"How is this a Christmas movie?"

"It takes place at Christmas? They all are reunited at the end because of a Christmas miracle?" Ben said.

"That is true. However, the film centers on Kevin's attempts to ward off burglars, and the only parts when Christmas come into play is the exposition- the family's Christmas trip- and Catherine O'Hara's argument that she needs to get home because she needs to be with her son for Christmas. If the film took place over, say, Saint Patrick's Day, it would be virtually the same plotline."

"No, Stan, it's about the Holiday Spirit!" Eddie argued. "And it's set during Christmas! That's the whole point!"

"If that's your logic, Die Hard is a Christmas movie."

"Die Hard is a Christmas movie, though!" Bev yelled.

"I'm surrounded by idiots," Stan muttered in a pretty good impression of Scar from The Lion King.

The next film they chose was Bev's pick, and she decided on National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation- her and Richie's favorite. It was part

of the way through the movie when Richie got up to grab more snacks, and then they heard a scream from the kitchen.

Eddie was up first and sprinted to the kitchen. "What is it? Are you okay? Should we call 911?"

Richie was silent, staring at his phone.

"Do you have some sort of life-threatening disease? Is it terminal?" Stan prodded.

Richie was silent.

"Is it good or bad news?" Bill asked, finally.

"It might be the best fucking news anybody has ever received in the history of the world," he finally declared.

"Just tell us!" Georgie exclaimed.

"I got chosen to headline for the winter comedy special. Holy shit, I mean, it was a long shot I'd even be featured, but it'll be my name on the posters and I get to pick entry music, guys! Like a real comedian! And I bet I'll be chosen to host or headline next year too, and this is huge for my career! Guys!" Richie's face was alight with excitement, and Bill felt a rush of excitement for his friend.

"When is it?" Ben asked. "We'll all have to come!"

"Umm," Richie checked the email, "the twenty-first. It starts at eight."

Bev went to check her calendar and then looked up with an absolutely heartbroken face. "Rich, I'm so sorry. Ben, Bill, Stan and I have plans."

"We do?" Bill asked because he didn't remember those plans at all.

"Yeah, Mike's friend's thing? The couples cookie-decorating class? He needed a certain amount of people to sign up for the university to sponsor it, and so you and Stan agreed to pretend to be a couple and come with us," Ben reminded him.

"Oh yeah! Richie, I'm sure we could cancel-"

"No, no! Go have fun! I mean, after this, there'll be lots of other big shows. Mike and Eddie will support me, right?"

"Actually, Rich," Mike started, "I have that interview that night. The one for the middle school job? I really wish I could go, but, well, this is a huge opportunity, and-"

"Go get that bread, Mike," Richie stated dismissively. "Seriously, Eddie will come and do his job as my unofficial co-manager, and y'all can come to my next show."

The Losers smiled appreciatively and returned to the movie. Georgie grabbed Richie's hand.

"If I lived here, I would come to see your show."

"I wouldn't let you, George, but thank you for the nice thought."

They finished National Lampoon's and decided to order from their favorite take-out place. It was Mediterranean food, which they all loved. so they snacked on tabouli and kebabs while Georgie told them about his robotics team back in Derry, and Richie emailed his comedy instructor back.

After lunch, they got back into movie positions to watch Eddie's choice of movie, which was White Christmas. Bill thought it was pretty good, considering, but Richie said it was terrible and sappy and lay his head in Eddie's lap while watching and sent Bev memes on Instagram. Eddie definitely did not relax into Richie's comforting weight and did not subtly shift around so he would be more comfortable.

Bill chose How The Grinch Stole Christmas as the sun started to get lower, and Stan was extremely confused (having never seen the film), so he sat close to Bill and asked questions like "wait why does he hate Christmas?" and "wait that's his heart? disgusting" and finally, "awww, he gave the first slice to his dog! I love him!" Bill just smiled. For the penultimate film of the evening, Stan got to choose, and he picked It's A Wonderful Life. He lay his head on Bill's shoulder,

casually, and Georgie lay in Bill's lap, and Eddie snapped a photo.

Edward > billandstanandgeorgie2.png

Edward > just a dad whose son and husband fell asleep during the family movie night

William > I!! Hate!!! You!!!!

Edward > :)

The movie started out dark, with a guy contemplating suicide, and then got better. Stan sniffed at the appropriate parts, and Georgie and Eddie shed a tear or two as well. When the movie was over, it was dinnertime, and Mike endeavored to make a Denbrough Family Christmas Dinner- turkey and potatoes and green beans, and cider Bev bought at the store and microwaved. While he was cooking, Bill and Eddie re-made the beds and cleaned up the popcorn and Georgie listened to some of Richie's more child-friendly jokes and gave critique. Bill watched them with a fond smile.

After a while, Georgie wandered into the kitchen to help make dinner. Bill set the table and they all sat down, while Mike and Bev and Georgie carried plates into the dining room.

"It's almost as good as mom's," Georgie explained. "Mom's will always be the best, but yours is the second-best."

"Aww! Georgie!" Bev smiled, bumping his shoulder. "You helped us a bunch."

Once they had eaten their fill, Richie brought out some cookies and they turned on the Christmas episodes of The Office. They all had different favorites, so they just watched all of them. And once it was over, they realized Georgie had an early train ride, so they sadly went off to bed.

Laying in bed, Bill was dozing off when he heard Georgie speak. "I had a really good time, Billy."

"So did we, Georgie. You'll have to come back for spring break,

maybe see one of Richie's shows."

"yeah! He told me his VeggieTales joke!"

"he's told us some variation of that joke at least twenty times," Bill muttered. the brothers chatted quietly for a while after that, and Stan would have eventually snapped "Let me sleep, guys" if it hadn't been the Denbrough brothers. he always had a weakness for the Denbrough brothers.

Notes for the Chapter:

i personally hc that stan was the denbrough go-to babysitter when bill was busy (which was a lot) and he was at bill's house a lot anyways, so he was basically like georgie's other brother. he called bill and stanley "papa" when he was little and richie and eddie "uncle richie" and "uncle eddie" until he was like. six and stan would Kill and Die for georgie

Author's Note:

welcome to my losers club fanfic! i'm lowkey nervous to write a chapter every day, but we'll see how it goes!

my tumblr is @omg-can-i-pet-your-robot!